

A man in Roman armor, including a breastplate and a red cape, holding a Roman helmet with a red plume. The background is a dark, textured wall.

# RR



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# Did Jesus Actually Speak to the Centurion?

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# Did Jesus Actually Speak to the Centurion?

Eric Lyons, M.Min



**Q**: In comparing the two accounts of Jesus healing the centurion's servant, Matthew indicates that the centurion came to Jesus personally. At the same time, Luke explains that he sent others to plead with Jesus on his (and his servant's) behalf. How can both of these accounts be true?

**A**: The accounts in question are found in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10. Indeed, Matthew indicates that "when Jesus had entered Capernaum, **a centurion came to Him**, pleading with Him" (Matthew 8:5). On the other hand, Luke notes that when the centurion "heard about Jesus, **he sent elders of the Jews to Him**, pleading with Him to come and heal the servant" (Luke 7:3; cf. 7:6). Do the differences in these accounts demand that we judge them contradictory, or can they be reasonably and justly harmonized?

To help answer this question, consider a scenario where the President of the United States sends two individuals from his administration to your house with an official invitation to dine at the White House. What might you **truthfully** tell your friends about this encounter? To one

friend, you might give every detail, describing the **two individuals** who came to your house, what **they** said to you, and how you responded to **them**, etc. To another friend, you might simply say, "The **President** has asked me to come to eat at the White House, and I told **him** 'Yes!'" The two different versions you tell are totally different, but both are true. How can the second account be truthful? Because "he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself"<sup>1</sup>—a legal principle (known as the "law of agency")<sup>2</sup> that billions of people around the world have understood and accepted for millennia.<sup>3</sup>

Though some may not like it, and others (who continually cry "Bible contradiction") may "not have it,"<sup>4</sup> the fact is, the Bible writers **frequently** (and logically) employed this widely-practiced-and-accepted, legal principle of proxy in their penning of Scripture. Before turning our attention back to the centurion's interaction with Jesus, consider a few (of the many) examples of the "law of agency" in Scripture.

- Moses wrote about Joseph, who was second in command of all of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-44), repeatedly doing things that he undoubtedly **ordered** to be

done (and not literally done by him). The text says that **Joseph "gathered...and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting"** (Genesis 41:48-49). Later, "**Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians**" (Genesis 41:56). "**Joseph**" also "**gathered up all the money** that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and **Joseph brought the money** into Pharaoh's house" (Genesis 47:14). What's more, "**Joseph gave**" and "**fed**" the Egyptians "**with bread** in exchange for all their livestock" (Genesis 47:17). Most everyone easily and rightly understands that all these statements are made in light of **Joseph's authority** and **not** of him personally doing each and every one of these individual tasks (on behalf of hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions of people). It truthfully can be said that what Joseph authorized and commanded, "he did." Like all sorts of leaders in the past and present, Joseph was viewed as ultimately responsible for Egypt's success or failure (at least during seven years of plenty and seven years of famine—Genesis 41:1-47:26). All those actions done **on Joseph's behalf** were done (in a very real sense) "**by Joseph.**"

- At one point, Joseph reminded his brothers that they had sold him "**into Egypt**" (Genesis 45:4), when technically they sold him to the **Midianites** (Genesis 37:36), who in turn sold him into Egypt. Nearly 2,000 years later, Stephen

used Joseph's same language to describe Joseph being sold by his brothers "into Egypt"—Acts 7:9. Truly, this type of speech was used, understood, and perfectly acceptable among Israel **for 2,000 years!**

- The Gospel writers frequently use such acceptable legal language throughout their accounts of the life of Christ. For example, John wrote that "the Pharisees had heard that **Jesus** made and baptized more disciples than John (though," John explains, "**Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples**") (John 4:1-2).
- Prior to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem during the final week of His life, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all indicate that He instructed **two of His disciples**, saying, "Go...find a colt... and bring it here" (Luke 19:30; Matthew 21:2; Mark 11:2). The **disciples** then "brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it" (11:7; cf. Matthew 21:7; Luke 19:35). Yet, when John briefly addresses these same events, he simply notes, "**Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it**" (12:14). Did Jesus personally obtain the donkey? No. However, what Jesus commanded, "He did" (in the "law-of-agency" sense).
- One of the most well-known examples of this type of language is found in Acts 1:18. Luke mentions that **Judas** "purchased a field with the wages of iniquity" (Acts 1:18), yet literally it was the **chief priests** who used the deceased Judas's 30 pieces of silver, which he had returned to them to buy the potter's field (Matthew 27:3-10).

The accounts of Jesus speaking "to the centurion" are easily

harmonized by considering that (1) "he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself"; and (2) the Bible writers frequently used this language throughout Scripture. Did the humble centurion<sup>5</sup> plead with Jesus via the Jewish elders (in Luke 7:3) and through his friends (in Luke 7:6)? Yes. Did Jesus respond to the centurion through these same men? It certainly seems so (Matthew 8:7; Luke 7:3-9). **Might it also be the case** that at some point, the centurion personally came to where Jesus and the crowd were located in Capernaum, but not necessarily in Jesus' immediate presence? Yes. And, though not demanded, could it be that Jesus also momentarily bypassed the proxy and spoke directly to the centurion? Indeed, such is possible.

Whereas Matthew gives a more summarized view of the interaction between Jesus and the centurion, omitting the technical details regarding those who were sent on the centurion's behalf (Luke 7:3-8), Luke includes those details. On the other hand, whereas Matthew includes more of Jesus' hard-hitting

speech on this occasion (Matthew 8:10-13), Luke gives a very abbreviated form (Luke 7:9). As expected from two honest, independent writers, we have two different (but harmonious!) accounts.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> From the Latin maxim, "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se*."
- <sup>2</sup> See "Agency Law and Legal Definition" (2021), USLegal, <https://definitions.uslegal.com/a/agency/>.
- <sup>3</sup> If a man hires an assassin to murder the President, both the assassin and the man who hired him would be guilty of murder. In fact, the "man behind the murder" (who didn't actually pull the trigger yet proposed and funded it) would likely be prosecuted to a greater degree and given a more severe sentence upon being found guilty "**of murder**." Indeed, "he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself."
- <sup>4</sup> That is, they seem unwilling to listen to any possible explanation that potentially absolves the Bible writers of error.
- <sup>5</sup> Who, as a Roman soldier leading 100 men, would have been accustomed to "doing things" through the soldiers under his command.

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# David & Jonathan: Homosexuals?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

A CLASSIC case of approaching the Bible with one's own pre-conceived agenda, searching for some shred of a hint that can then be spun to fit the intended narrative, is the claim that David and Jonathan shared a homosexual relationship.<sup>1</sup> The passage used to advance this allegation reads:

How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; **your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women** (2 Samuel 1:25-26).

The Hebrew word for “love” in verse 26 carries a variety of meanings, but the primary meaning is the care and concern that one has for one's fellow man (whether male or female). Hence, it is used as the opposite of hate,<sup>2</sup> friendship (Proverbs 17:9; 27:5), as well as God's love for His people (Hosea 11:4; Isaiah 63:9; Jeremiah 31:3; Zephaniah 3:17) and vice-versa (Jeremiah 2:2).<sup>3</sup>

It is true that the term can be used to refer to sexual lust, as in the case of Amnon. After raping his half-sister, the text informs us: “Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the **love** with which he had loved her”

(2 Samuel 13:15). The term “love” in this context refers exclusively to sexual desire—nothing more. The Song of Solomon uses the word to refer to the married love between a man and a woman (2:4,5; 5:8; 8:6,7; cf. Proverbs 5:19).

However, a significant difference exists between the comradery, friendship, and close connection sustained between two men who are lifelong friends, and the sexual relationship shared by two men. The former relationship has no hint whatsoever of sexual attraction, while the latter relationship is largely **defined** by the sexual connection. Indeed, it is the **sexual** activity that differentiates the two relationships. It is true that, like heterosexuals, two homosexuals can experience a variety of non-sexual feelings for each other, including friendship or a deep “soul-mate” connection. But this fact must not be allowed to obscure the real issue. The one has nothing to do with the other. The entire question comes down to whether two men have a God-given, God-authorized right to enact a sexual relationship with each other.

In the case of David and Jonathan, the circumstantial evidence suggests that they were simply close friends. They both were heavily involved in heterosexual marriages.

They both had children from those marriages who received the priority that is typical of such marriages. For example, Jonathan desired a covenant between himself and David that would ensure the safety of his wife and family:

“And you shall not only show me **the kindness of the LORD** while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “Let the LORD require it at the hand of David's enemies” (1 Samuel 20:14-16).

Jonathan's concern was that **the same kindness** that David showed to himself be extended to his family. Was Jonathan requesting that David enact the same sexual relationship with Jonathan's kids that David showed to him? Or, rather, was he referring to the **friendship and close-knit care and concern for each other** that the two shared? The latter is in keeping with the context. Jonathan later reminded David: “May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever” (1 Samuel 20:42). Jonathan was concerned with sustaining, maintaining, and perpetuating

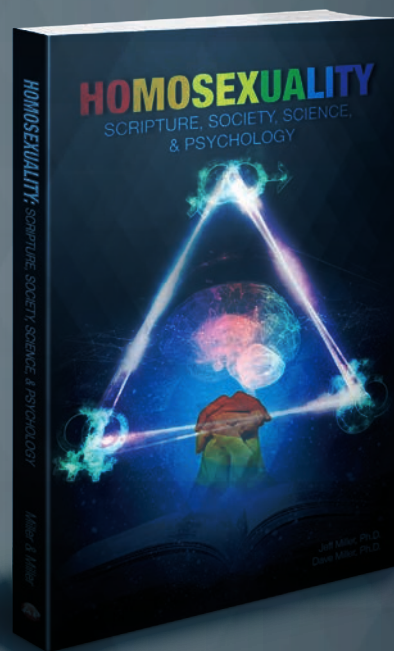
his posterity through his marriage to a woman.

The fact is that **no evidence whatsoever** exists in the Bible that would lead one to believe that David and Jonathan sustained a **sexual** relationship with each other. In fact, a sober examination of the evidence leads even the defender of homosexuality to admit the fact, as in the admission made by a lesbian: “While **the Bible doesn’t explicitly state that David and Jonathan were lovers**, Jesus himself did not say anything directly about homosexuality in the Bible either. Scripture does not condemn loving, responsible homosexual relationships.”<sup>4</sup> (For an examination of the validity of the claim regarding Jesus, see AP’s book *Homosexuality: Scripture, Society, Science, & Psychology*.)

Another factor to consider: The Law of Moses condemned homosexuality in no uncertain terms (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Indeed, it was a death-penalty offense. But if God readily condemned David for his violation of another Mosaic law pertaining to sexual contact, specifically, adultery (2 Samuel 11), why would He not have condemned David for homosexual contact as well? In fact, since Jonathan was married, he would have been “cheating” on his wife with David. Do homosexuals today who are in a “committed” relationship consider their partner as committing adultery if he has an “affair” with another man? To ask is to answer.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For example, Kittredge Cherry (2020), “David and Jonathan: Same-sex Love Between Men in the Bible,” *Q Spirit*, December 29, <https://qspirit.net/david-jonathan-same-sex-love/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Proverbs 10:12; 15:17; Psalm 109:4,5; Ecclesiastes 9:1,6.
- <sup>3</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (1906), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000 reprint), p. 13.
- <sup>4</sup> Cherry (2020).



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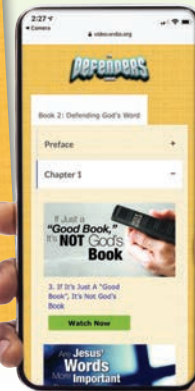
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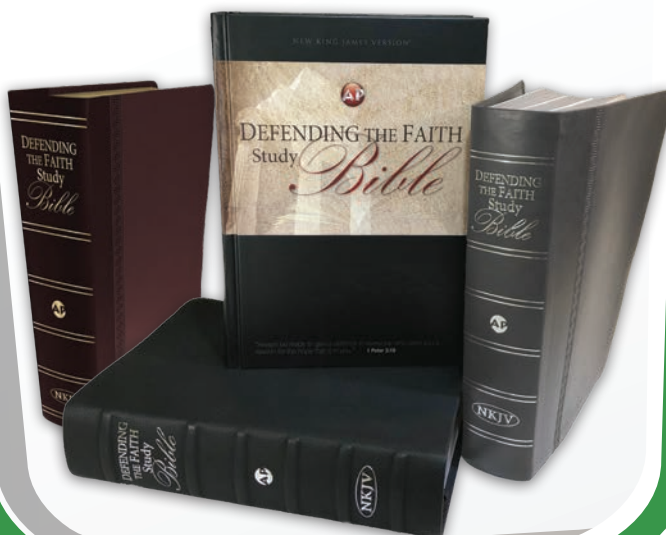
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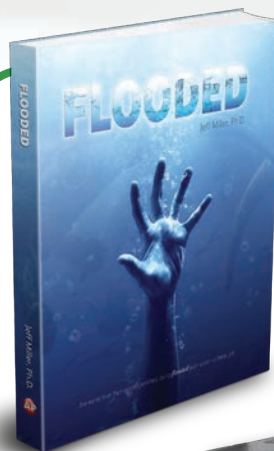
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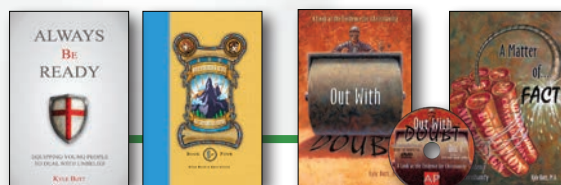


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# Hebrews 10:22 and the Necessity of Baptism

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

[**Editor's Note:** This article is excerpted from AP's book *Baptism & the Greek Made Simple*.]

*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:19-23).*

**I**N addition to the host of passages that explicitly affirm the essentiality of water baptism for salvation, the grammar of Hebrews 10:22 provides additional verification. "Let us draw near," or as Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest renders it, "let us keep on drawing near,"<sup>1</sup> is a present middle/passive subjunctive verb used for exhortation—a "hortatory subjective."<sup>2</sup> This drawing nearer to God is to be accompanied by "a true heart in full assurance of faith." The term rendered "full assurance" refers to a "state of **complete** certainty, **full** assurance, certainty."<sup>3</sup> The recipients of the book already

possessed faith (when they became Christians), but they now needed to mature their faith and bring it to a more complete state of assurance, conviction, and certainty (particularly since they were tending to revert back to their Jewish conceptions).<sup>4</sup> This admonition is followed by two Perfect passive participles. The Perfect tense in Greek connotes "completed action with a resulting state of being."<sup>5</sup> Perfect passive participles describe action that is either coincident with or antecedent to the principal verb.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the actions of "having been sprinkled" and "having been washed" occurred **before** the admonition to "keep on drawing near to God." As Marcus Dods explains: "These participles express **not** conditions of approach to God which are **yet** to be achieved, but conditions **already** possessed."<sup>7</sup> Mounce conveys the thrust of the perfect passive participle even more forcefully: "**since** our hearts **have been**..."<sup>8</sup> The following two participles, therefore, refer back to the point in time of their **conversion**—when they accessed the "blood of Jesus" (vs. 19). As Carl Moll noted in his comments on verse 22: "We thus refer the language, not to sanc-

tification, but to *justification* on the ground of a propitiation."<sup>9</sup>

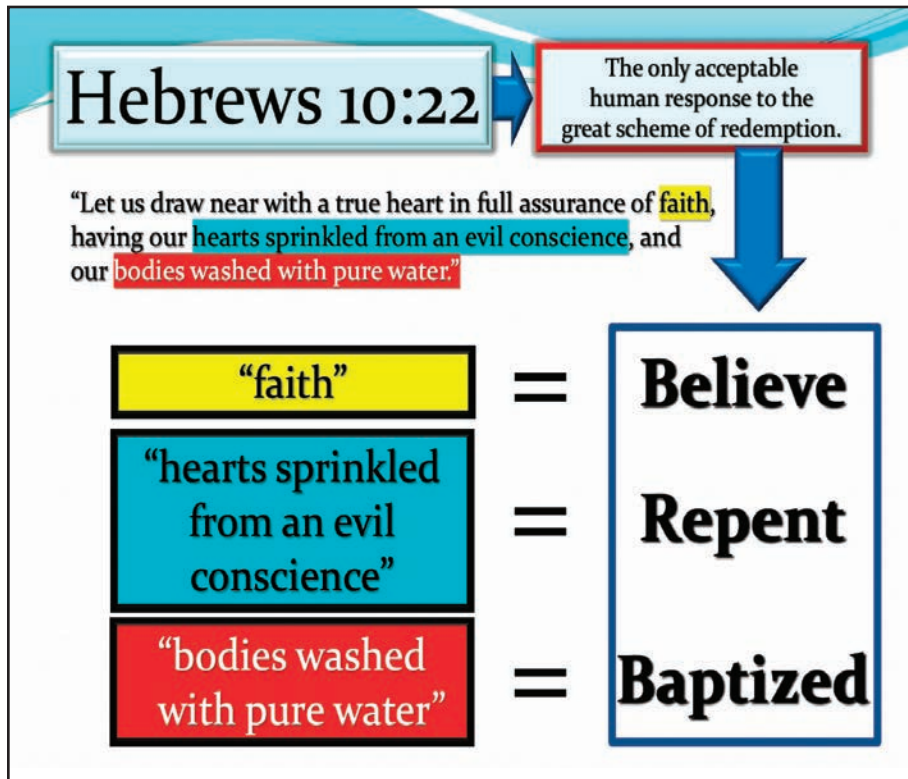
The first participle speaks of "**having had** our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."<sup>10</sup> In keeping with the subject matter of Hebrews, the notion of "sprinkled" undoubtedly harks back to and echoes the Law of Moses practice of sprinkling people and objects with various liquids (including water as well as blood) for purification purposes. However, it is a physical impossibility for one literally to sprinkle his heart, mind, and conscience. Hence, the writer is using figurative language. But how/when did they "sprinkle their hearts"? The answer lies in the fact that before one can become a Christian, one must alter his heart and mind, i.e., repent (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; et al.). The Greek term for "repentance" literally means "a change of mind."<sup>11</sup> So the author and recipients of the book of Hebrews came to faith in Christ, and then repented of their sins. If, instead, the "sprinkling" here refers to the cleansing power of Christ's blood, the design of baptism remains the same, since the two participles indicate **coincident** (with each other) actions. The former possible meaning is inviting since Romans 6 distinguishes between the "death" to sin that occurs in the mind of the prospective convert at the point of repentance which precedes the spiritual

*Spiritual death to  
sin occurs in the  
mind of God.*



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Kenneth Wuest (2002 reprint), *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 529; Also R.C.H. Lenski (2001 reprint), *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 347.
- <sup>2</sup> William Davis (1923), *Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row), p. 76; H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey (1955), *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan), p. 171; Ray Summers (1950), *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press), p. 108).
- <sup>3</sup> Frederick Danker, rev. and ed. (2000), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), p. 827.
- <sup>4</sup> See the meaning in Colossian 2:2 and Hebrews 6:11, as well as the verb form used in Romans 4:21, Colossians 4:12, and Romans 14:5.
- <sup>5</sup> Summers, p. 103; Davis, p. 156.
- <sup>6</sup> Davis, p. 157.
- <sup>7</sup> Marcus Dods (no date), "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 4:346-347, emp. added.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Mounce and William Mounce (2011), *The Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), emp. added. See also NCV and ISV.
- <sup>9</sup> Carl Moll (1870), *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Charles Scribner), p. 175, italics in orig.
- <sup>10</sup> Translated by Wuest, p. 529.
- <sup>11</sup> Danker, p. 640.
- <sup>12</sup> See Henry Alford (1874), *Alford's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint), 4:196.
- <sup>13</sup> p. 350.
- <sup>14</sup> Robert Milligan (1950), *The New Testament Commentary: Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), 9:282-283.
- <sup>15</sup> James MacKnight (no date), *A New Literal Translation, from the Original Greek of all the Apostolical Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 556, emp. added.



death or termination of sin which occurs in **the mind of God** at the point of burial in water.

The next participle, which describes action that occurred coincident with the sprinkling, adds **"having had** our body washed with pure water" (again, Wuest's literal rendering). Observe that the use of the term "body" (singular-*soma*), not *sarx* ("flesh") indicates a **literal** washing of the physical body with H<sub>2</sub>O—unlike the **figurative** use of sprinkling in the previous participle.<sup>12</sup> The only activity associated with Christianity that involves water applied to the body is baptism. Lenski insisted that "the New Testament knows of only one washing, namely baptism."<sup>13</sup> Writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Robert Milligan noted: "Indeed, nearly all eminent expositors are now agreed that there is here a manifest reference to the ordinance of Christian baptism."<sup>14</sup> To summarize, in Hebrews 10:22, the inspired writer urges his Christian audience to continue to draw closer to God, even as they had com-

menced that approach when they first believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized.

One other observation that merits consideration: in the very next verse, the writer admonishes his readers to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." The term "confession" is the noun form (*homologian*) of the verb that means to confess. The New Testament plainly declares that one of the prerequisites to initial salvation/forgiveness—in addition to faith, repentance, and baptism—is oral confession with the mouth (Romans 10:9-10). MacKnight rightly notes: "The apostle in this exhortation referred to that confession of their hope of salvation through Christ, which the primitive Christians **made at baptism**."<sup>15</sup> If that is the confession that the writer has in mind in verse 23, then the writer alludes to all four **prerequisites** to salvation in two verses: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

[See the graphic above.]

# "Everybody Knows the Bible Contradicts Itself"

Dave Miller, Ph.D.



**I**F my memory serves me correctly, it was 1969. I was a sophomore at Camelback High School in Phoenix, Arizona sitting in a social studies class. Our regular teacher was absent that day. In her place was a college student-teacher who was fulfilling his college requirements for a degree in secondary education from Arizona State University. We were in the midst of a class discussion when a young lady interjected her comments, prefaced by the words, "The Bible says...." She was abruptly interrupted by the teacher with these words: "Everyone knows that the Bible contradicts itself. In one place it says 'an eye for an eye,' while in another place it says 'turn the other cheek.' So we won't be using the Bible in this discussion."

Looking back on that event over 50 years later, I shudder to imagine the extent to which destructive seeds of doubt were sown in the hearts of numerous young people regarding the divine authenticity of the Bible and Christian morality. Such a dismissive, cavalier attitude on the part of a person placed in a position of authority no doubt wielded a monumental impact on juvenile minds. Yet his surface, superficial treatment of Scripture betrayed an abject ignorance of the Bible as well as what can only

be described as extreme prejudice. "Prejudice" is defined as "an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge."<sup>1</sup> The teacher had pre-judged the Bible, having come to a conclusion that was based on inadequate evidence. It was the Sixties—a time when sinister forces were operating to overthrow the founding principles of America. As Bob Dylan's 1964 song declared: "The Times They Are a-Changin'."<sup>2</sup>

Since that time, attacks on the Bible and the Christian religion have intensified and become common place through the public educational system of the nation. For decades now, many professors, instructors, and teachers at every level of schooling have been brazen and fearless in their relentless assault upon the religious and spiritual moorings of America. Their hostility toward God, the Bible, and Christianity have come to thoroughly permeate and dominate public education. Their skepticism has burgeoned into acceptance of ideologies that forthrightly reject the Christian worldview, including atheism, Marxism, and eastern religion. In the meantime, no telling how many millions of Americans—from childhood to adulthood—have lived their lives

since then, having rejected Christianity based on such flimsy misinformation foisted upon them via the flawed beliefs of their mistaught teachers.

But "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Legion have been the skeptics over the last 2,000 years who have maintained that the Bible contradicts itself. An innumerable host of alleged discrepancies have been brought boldly forward and foisted upon an unsuspecting audience. Yet, scores of volumes have been written over the centuries that provide logical, decisive refutation of **all** such allegations leveled at the Bible. They have all been adequately answered and the Bible fully exonerated—providing yet additional proof of its own divine origin.<sup>3</sup>

The nature of human existence is such that all human beings are under obligation to weigh the evidence and arrive at the truth. All are fully capable of doing so—and all will be held accountable for doing so. Those who lack the will or interest to do so will be judged accordingly. Jesus stated forthrightly: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Paul enjoined: "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). And as John insisted: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Whether that young student-teacher realized it or not, he functioned as a false prophet that day in that Phoenix school classroom. It was the responsibility of all who listened to him to do as the noble Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily to **find out whether these things were so**" (Acts 17:11).



By the way, what about the alleged contradiction touted by the student-teacher before the classroom filled with vulnerable, naïve youth? Even a casual, surface analysis of the Bible shows that the “eye for an eye” allusion refers to the *Lex Talionis*<sup>4</sup> of the Old Law which were designed to **limit** the amount of punishment by making it fit the crime (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21). Hence, these laws were built into the Hebrew civil law code for the purpose of regulating civil society in 1500 B.C. The latter allusion, “turn the other cheek,” is a reference to Jesus’ remark in the Sermon on the Mount in which He was teaching the necessity of not being vengeful or retaliatory when a person is mistreated by another person (Matthew 5:38-42). Incredibly, the two references have nothing to do with each other, apply to completely different circumstances, and in no way constitute a biblical contradiction. Using them to level such a lame accusation demonstrates, to say the least, gross rhetorical incompetence.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/prejudice>.
- <sup>2</sup> Bob Dylan (1963/1964), “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” *Bob Dylan Newsletter*, <https://www.bobdylan.com/songs/times-they-are-changin/>.
- <sup>3</sup> See the three volumes in *The Anvil Rings* series at <https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkel0001>.
- <sup>4</sup> “The lex talionis gave permission for mutual injury”—Edward Young (1964), *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 111; See also Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, eds. (2001), *The Oxford Guide to Ideas & Issues of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 543; William Miller (2006), *Eye for an Eye* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 65.

# Does the Water Regenerate?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

**Q:** Do you believe that when a person is baptized that it is the water itself that regenerates? Or do you believe that when a person is baptized it is the washing by the Holy Spirit that regenerates?

**A: The water certainly has no cleansing power whatsoever.**

The only reason why Peter could say that “baptism saves” (1 Peter 3:21) is because that is the point at which we are forgiven of sin based on the sacrifice of Christ. Hence, it is Christ’s blood—and **only His blood**—that cleanses sin (1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 1:5). [Recall that Peter clarified his “baptism saves” statement by adding “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” So baptism “now saves” via the atoning work of Christ, i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection—which is the Gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).] The H<sub>2</sub>O of baptism is parallel to the water of the Jordan in 2 Kings 5. Naaman’s leprosy was not cleansed by those waters—but by God Himself the moment Naaman met the terms/conditions of cleansing (i.e., immersing 7 times). Similarly, the waters of the Pool of Siloam possessed no healing power. It was solely Jesus who restored sight to the blind man—on the condition that the man would go to that pool and apply the water to the mud Jesus had smeared on his eyes (John 9:7). Neither water nor mud, then or now, has any cleansing capability. They were merely mediums/conduits Jesus used to impart the blessing of physical cleansing to the blind man. The same may be said of the waters of baptism. God has always used **physical** conditions as preludes to His blessings, but the power remains within God’s own mind. Hence, salvation occurs in God’s mind the very moment a person complies with God’s stipulated condition(s). Water baptism is not the **HOW** of salvation—but, rather, the **WHEN**.

Regarding the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5) by allowing Scripture to interpret itself [see AP’s book *Baptism & the Greek Made Simple*, p. 142], it becomes apparent that the Holy Spirit regenerates people via His Gospel message which instructs the individual to be immersed in water. The term “Spirit” in John 3:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Titus 3:5 all refer to the message (“word”—Ephesians 5:26) that the Holy Spirit provided via inspired writers/spokesmen. When that same message is presented to hearers today, requiring them to manifest faith, repentance, oral confession, and immersion in water (Romans 10:17; 2:4; 10:9-10; 6:3-4), and the individual complies with those prerequisites to salvation, when that individual rises from the water of baptism, he/she may then be said to have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit (i.e., based on the blood sacrifice of Christ, the Holy Spirit regenerated the individual by means of His stipulated prerequisites to cleansing by that blood). The Holy Spirit regenerates people via their obedience to the Gospel. Notice how Peter words it: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22-23). “Through the Spirit” is a textual variant that may not have been in the original text, but it is nevertheless an accurate representation of the facts, since the only way for anyone to receive salvation from God is for Him to tell us how we may do so. God did so via the Gospel message authored by the Holy Spirit. When we read Scripture and implement its instructions in our lives, we are being influenced and instructed by the Spirit.



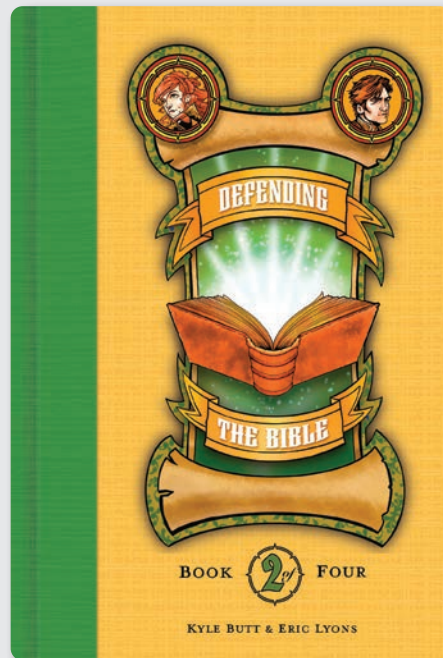
## NOTE FROM *The Editor*



### New Book for Teens

This is the time of year when thoughts turn toward gift-giving. AP is certainly in a position to satisfy those thoughts. Spiritually uplifting resources for all ages are available at under market prices. Book 2 in the Defenders Series has now been released, titled *Defending the Bible*. This volume is designed for young people who want to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Bible is God's inspired Word. This book is for youth who want to prepare themselves to take their stand in the ranks of God's army on the front lines of the spiritual battle. It challenges them to arm themselves with the truth, reason, and faith that it takes to defend the Bible. The prequel to this volume is *Defending God: His Existence & Creation*.

In addition to our newer volumes, be sure to visit our webstore to see the host of additional gifts that will provide spiritual enrichment for the beneficiaries. What better way to express love and concern for others than to give them something that



will turn their thoughts toward the end of life on Earth and the onset of eternity? We are in a momentous battle for the souls of mankind. Nothing is more important than that we nurture our own souls and the souls of our family and acquaintances in anticipation of our departure from this physical realm. AP materials are calculated to enable you to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” as well as to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15).

**Dave Miller**

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for More Details